

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 049493
ORIGIN NEA-10

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DRAFTED BY NEA/P:WBHARRIS:RGH
APPROVED BY NEA/P:REUNDELAND
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NEA/EGY - MR. NEWBERRY
NEA/ARP - MR. TWINAM

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY SANA
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
AMEMBASSY TUNIS
USMISSION SINAI
AMCONSUL DHAHRAN
USMISSION GENEVA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMCONSUL ALEXANDRIA
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
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PAGE 02 STATE 049493

USMISSION USNATO
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY DOHA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
USCINCEUR
DOD
JCS
CIA
USIA
NSC

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TEL AVIV FOR PAO, DELIVER BY 9 A.M., CINCEUR FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR

SUBJECT: DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING FOR FEBRUARY 24

1. FOR YOUR INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE FOLLOWING ARE
EXCERPTS FROM DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING FOR FEBRUARY 24,
1978.

Q. THE ISRAELI PRESS REPORTS THAT THE SAUDIS HAVE
PLACED HAWK ANTI-AIRCRAFT MISSILES CLOSE TO THE ISRAELI
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PAGE 03 STATE 049493

BORDER. DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THIS REPORT? IF SO, ANY
COMMENT?

A. I DON'T HAVE ANY COMMENT, BUT I HADN'T SEEN THE
REPORT. I WILL LOOK INTO IT. I DON 'T KNOW ANYTHING
ABOUT IT.

Q. THERE ARE OTHER REPORTS FROM THE ISRAELIS THIS TIME
THAT THE SYRIANS HAVE MADE A COUPLE OF MIG-23 FLIGHTS
ACROSS OCCUPIED TERRITORY. DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING ON THAT?

A. NO. AND I CAN SAY I HAVEN'T EVEN SEEN A HINT OF IT.

Q. APPARENTLY, THEY HAVE REGISTERED A COMPLAINT WITH
THE U.N. OBSERVER FORCE THERE AND THE U.N. OBSERVER

FORCE HAS CONFIRMED THAT THOSE FLIGHTS DID TAKE PLACE.

A. I LITERALLY DON'T HAVE ANYTHING ON IT, NOR HAVE I BEEN GIVEN ANYTHING. THAT IS THE PLACE IT WOULD BE LODGED. HOWEVER, IN OTHER INSTANCES OF COMPLAINTS OF THAT SORT, UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 04 STATE 049493

THEY HAVE ALSO COME TO US. I JUST DON'T HAVE ANYTHING ON IT.

Q. HAS THE ADMINISTRATION RECEIVED ANY KIND OF AN INFORMAL, ORAL OR WRITTEN PROTEST OVER THE INTENTION TO SELL PLANES TO ISRAEL ONLY AS PART OF A PACKAGE?

A. I DON'T THINK I WOULD BE ABLE TO GET YOU ANYTHING ON THAT INSOFAR AS WHAT THE ISRAELIS OR ANY OTHER PARTIES MAY HAVE SAID TO US THROUGH THAT KIND OF CHANNEL.

Q. HAVE YOU RECEIVED ANY INDICATIONS, EITHER THROUGH ATHERTON OR THROUGH THE ISRAELIS HERE, THAT THEY MIGHT STIFFEN THEIR NEGOTIATING TERMS IF THE UNITED STATES REFUSED TO DEAL WITH THE ISRAELI ARMS PROPOSALS SEPARATELY?

A. THE ONLY PLACE I'VE SEEN THAT SPECULATION, AGAIN LITERALLY, IS IN THE PRESS. I'VE NOT SEEN ANY INDICATION OF THAT KIND OF ATTITUDE AS AN OFFICIAL REPRESENTATION.

Q. IS THE UNITED STATES IN AGREEMENT WITH ISRAEL ON THE PRESENCE OF THE SYRIAN TROOPS IN LEBANON KEEPING THE SYRIANS BUSY IN LEBANON RATHER THAN BEING BUSY ON THE GOLAN HEIGHTS?

A. NO.

Q. THE AMERICAN ADMINISTRATION CALLED ON THE MIDDLE EAST LEADERS, AND ESPECIALLY THE ISRAELIS AND THE ARABS, TO BE MORE FLEXIBLE. I WONDER WHAT KIND OF FLEXIBILITY THE ADMINISTRATION IS LOOKING FORWARD TO SEE FROM THE ARAB LEADERS WHEN THEY ARE CONFRONTING ISRAEL, TO RELINQUISH THEIR LAND THAT IS OCCUPIED BY ISRAEL, OR WHAT? UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 05 STATE 049493

A. WE HAVE OUTLINED WHAT WE THINK IS NECESSARY IN THE FORM OF APPROACHES BY ALL OF THE PARTIES, WHAT WE THINK ARE THE ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS. WE HAVE DESCRIBED WHAT WE BELIEVE IS BASIC IN THE NATURE OF PEACE IN THE AREA, DEFINED WHAT WE THINK OUGHT TO BE UNDER THAT, UNDER THE QUESTION OF TERRITORIES, UNDER THE QUESTION OF THE WEST BANK AND THE REST. I THINK THE NEED FOR ALL PARTIES IS SIMPLY TO NEGOTIATE IN GOOD FAITH TOWARD MEETING THOSE BASIC CONCERNS.

Q. DO YOU HAVE ANY INFORMATION ON THE FIGHTING YESTERDAY REPORTED BETWEEN LEBANESE AND SYRIANS IN LEBANON?

A. NO, I DON'T. NOTHING BEYOND THE REPORTS.

Q. ARE YOU COMMENTING AT ALL ON THE PRESIDENT'S LETTER TO PRESIDENT SADAT ABOUT THE CYPRIOT INCIDENT?

A. NO.

Q. DO YOU HAVE ANY COMMENTS ON CONGRESSMAN ROSENTHAL'S SPEECH IN THE CONGRESS DAY BEFORE YESTERDAY DEALING WITH THE AIRCRAFT PACKAGE?

A. NO. LET ME JUST SAY GENERALLY WE WILL PROBABLY NOT HAVE COMMENTS ON INDIVIDUAL CONGRESSMEN'S REMARKS ON THE SUBJECT. WE WILL FROM TIME TO TIME PROBABLY REITERATE WHAT OUR POLICY LINE IS.

Q. YOUR POLICY ON IT IS BECOMING CLEAR, BUT THERE IS STILL SOME AMBIGUITY. I JUST HEARD A TAPE ON THE SECRETARY'S COMMENTS ON THE HILL TODAY. IT IS A LITTLE CLEARER, BUT YOU ARE STILL SPEAKING NOT IN SPECIFIC TERMS.

UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 06 STATE 049493

IS IT THE STATE DEPARTMENT OR THE ADMINISTRATION'S POSITION THAT IF AN EFFORT IS MADE TO BLOCK THE ARMS SALES TO THE ARABS THEY WILL WITHDRAW THE ARMS SALES TO ISRAEL? IS THAT SIMPLY WHAT PACKAGING MEANS OR DO YOU WANT TO LEAVE IT A LITTLE VAGUE STILL?

A. I WANT TO LEAVE IT A LITTLE VAGUE UNTIL I SEE WHAT HE SAID UP ON THE HILL.

Q. NO ONE, INCLUDING THE SECRETARY, HAS YET SAID THAT WE WILL WITHDRAW THE ARMS SALES TO ISRAEL IF THE ARMS SALES TO EGYPT AND SAUDI ARABIA APPEAR TO BE IN TROUBLE, IN SERIOUS DIFFICULTY. IS THAT WHAT YOU ARE SAYING WHEN YOU SPEAK OF A PACKAGE AND A BALANCE AND AN APPROACH?

A. I THINK THAT I WILL WALK ABOUT AS FAR AS THE SECRETARY HAS WALKED ON THAT. I DON'T HAVE ANYTHING FURTHER.

Q. THE SECRETARY WALKED PRETTY FAR ON THAT, HODDING.

A. I SAW THAT PART OF IT. I SAW THAT PART OF IT.

Q. HE SAID SOMETHING TO THE EFFECT OF ISN'T THAT WHAT A PACKAGE MEANS.

A. I SAW THAT.

Q. HE ANSWERED THE QUESTION BY TELLING PEOPLE THE PACKAGE INVOLVED SEVERAL PARTS, WHICH WE ALL KNOW. CAN YOU TAKE THE QUESTION WHETHER THE ADMINISTRATION INTENDS UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 07 STATE 049493

TO WITHDRAW THE ARMS SALES TO ISRAEL IF THE ARMS SALES TO SAUDI ARABIA AND EGYPT FACE SERIOUS DIFFICULTY?

A. I WILL TAKE THE QUESTION AND I THINK THE ANSWER IS GOING TO BE THAT THAT IS A SPECULATIVE QUESTION WHICH WE DON'T THINK WILL ARISE BECAUSE WE THINK CONGRESS WILL APPROVE THE PACKAGE.

Q. DOES THE STATE DEPARTMENT HAVE ANY REACTION TO THIS SAUDI APPEAL TO THE ARAB LEAGUE TO SEND ARMS AND SUPPORT TO SOMALIA?

A. NO, I DON'T.

Q. YOU DON'T HAVE ANYTHING ON THAT? YOU DON'T FEEL THAT IT IS CONSTRUCTIVE, OR DESTRUCTIVE?

A. I DON'T HAVE ANY RESPONSE ON IT RIGHT NOW. WHAT WE HAVE SAID GENERALLY, I COULD REPEAT AS POLICY: WE THINK AT THIS POINT THE BEST THING IS NOT FOR ANYONE TO CONTRIBUTE TO A BUILDUP OF FORCES IN THAT REGION AND IN THAT PARTICULAR CONFLICT. WE THINK IT OUGHT TO GO

THE OTHER WAY AROUND. THAT'S A REITERATION OF AN OLD
POLICY BUT THAT'S IT, REALLY. VANCE

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